Essex Supporting People

Service User Involvement Strategy

2005-2010

1st July 2005

Essex County Council

supporting**people**
supporting independence in Essex

Contents

1.0 Background

This strategy sets out Essex Supporting People's vision and commitment to making sure that service users are involved in all aspects of the Supporting People programme.

The strategy has been developed to reflect the feedback gained from service users and service user representative organisations on how services users would like to involved in the programme. The strategy has also been developed in line with the requirements of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on service user involvement[1] and within the values and standards set out in the Essex County Council's Draft Public Engagement Strategy, the Draft Community Care Participation Strategy and the Children and Young Peoples Services, Not Just Ticking the Box Participation Plan. It will also inform and complement the Essex Supporting People Communication Strategy.

The Essex Supporting team also recognises that most service providers in Essex have a number of existing methods for providing information to and involving service users in their support services, and the intention of this strategy is to complement and guide this activity.

The aim of the strategy is to outline how the Supporting People team will promote and improve effective and meaningful service user involvement within the team itself and how it will guide, support and measure service providers in developing service user consultation and involvement within

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[1] Supporting People : A guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services. Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. May 2003

their services. This strategy may be useful for anyone who has a responsibility for service user involvement.

2.0   Introduction

2.1   What is Supporting People

The Supporting People programme in Essex is based on a strong partnership between the County Council, the twelve Borough and District Councils, the eleven Primary Care Trusts, Essex Probation, local service providers and service users. It will deliver high quality and strategically planned housing-related support services, which are cost effective and reliable, and complement existing care services. The programme offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment, which enables them to have greater independence.

The Essex Vision for Supporting People is that;

> "Supporting People will provide practical, housing-related support that helps vulnerable people to establish a life in which they are safe, can access services and meet their responsibilities. As a result, people will have a better opportunity to sustain an independent life."

Supporting People aims to assess, plan and review housing related support services with a view to promoting good quality services that meet the needs of vulnerable people. This vision can only be achieved if service users are actively engaged in the Supporting People programme.
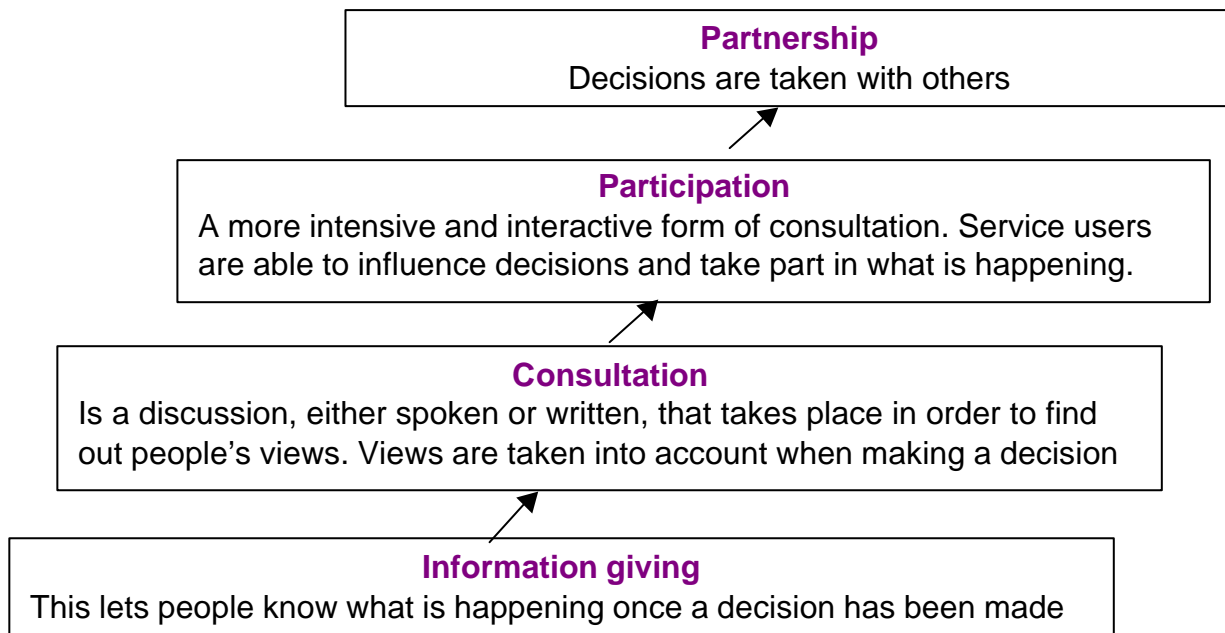
2.2 The reasons why service user involvement is essential include:

- Involvement furthers the goal of independence, through facilitating inclusion, encouraging the development of life skills, and enhancing self-esteem.

- Involvement is a way of bringing people together to achieve mutually desirable outcomes and is potentially an empowering and cohesive force.

- Involvement ensures that services reflect the needs and wishes of the people who use them and creates a sense of ownership if involvement initiatives are sustained by action.

- Involvement can help to guarantee a better quality of service.

- Involvement adds value to service planning, development and delivery.

- Involvement enables the organisation to draw upon, and make effective use of, peoples' skills and capacities. For example service users involved in training staff.

- Involvement is a requirement of national policy.[2]

2.3 Levels of service user involvement

Service user involvement in decision-making incorporates differing degrees of 'taking part' in the process and these include receiving information, being consulted and full partnership involvement in the development and evaluation of a service or project.

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[2] Supporting People : A guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services. Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. May 2003. Pages 12-13

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Partnership
Decisions are taken with others

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Participation
A more intensive and interactive form of consultation. Service users are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening.

Consultation
Is a discussion, either spoken or written, that takes place in order to find out people's views. Views are taken into account when making a decision

Information giving
This lets people know what is happening once a decision has been made

The Essex Supporting People team is committed to work with service users, providers and other stakeholders to promote and improve service user involvement across the housing-support sector, to ensure genuine and meaningful involvement.

3.0 How service users can be involved

This next section sets out how Essex Supporting People plans to take service user involvement forward.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) suggest in their guidance on service user involvement, that service users should be involved in the management of the Supporting People Programme and overall service developments on four levels. These four levels have been adapted to incorporate and reflect feedback from service users on the areas that they feel they have more interest in being involved in. (1 represents the highest level of interest).

3.1 Four levels of service user involvement

Service User Interest	Activity
3.1.1 Improvement to own service	• Day to day service (E.g. house meetings, forums, support plan, involved in developing information materials) • Service Review through a service user questionnaire and consultation as part of the validation visit. • Remodelling of services. • Performance Indicators.
3.1.2 Service planning and development	• Involved in the design and development of new service specifications and service models using service users own experience of what is and is not working well.
3.1.3. Contribution to the direction of Supporting People policy	• Development and implementation of the Service User Involvement Strategy. • Implementation of Supporting People 5 Year Strategy and Action Plan. • Development and implementation of the annual plan.
3.1.4. Involved in Service Management	• Involved in the development and management of housing support services. • Service user interview panel for staff recruitment, where appropriate.

3.2 Methods of involvement

The Supporting People programme covers a diverse range of individuals and groups within a range of services, delivered in a variety of ways and settings. A range of approaches to service user involvement is essential to ensure that as many service users as possible are given the opportunity to be engaged in the programme. It is important that at the planning stage of a consultation service users are asked how and when they would like to be involved and the approach used should reflect this.

The methods described below have been developed from service user consultations to date and feedback from service users and services user

representative organisations on the best methods and approach to involve service users in the Supporting People programme

Methods for service user involvement include:

Tools	Tool Properties
3.2.1 Communication	• Via the Essex Supporting People website http://supportingpeople.essexcc.gov.uk or through the Essex County Council Website Supporting People Programme link. • Two leaflets have been produced providing information about Supporting People aimed at service users. • Questionnaires in a range of different formats for different service user groups, including widgit and pictorial formats • Scrutiny of Supporting People documents and events ensuring Plain English is used and they are free of Supporting People jargon. • Service users are involved in the development of information material. • Ensuring that information is available in a range of formats and languages when needed.
3.2.2 Identify and map network of interested parties and methods of involvement	• Database of existing service user consultation mechanisms, service user groups, newsletters and other existing communication channels and assess if and how they can be tapped in to by Supporting People. This is to avoid unnecessary duplication and over consultation. • This allows for the exchange of information, knowledge and best practice to all stakeholders, including service users.
3.2.3 Meetings and forums	• Increase attendance and participation of service users at Supporting People inclusive forum events. • Tap in on existing service user forums, meetings and events. • Set up Supporting People specific forums, meetings and events in partnership. • Informal group discussions.

	• Potential Supporting People service users own territory in partnership with voluntary organisations.
3.2.4 Service user interview panel	• Staff interviews (as appropriate) • Work with service users to develop the questions that they want to ask the candidates. • Suitable training and support to carry out the interviews, including carrying out 'mock' interviews. • Certificate of achievement awarded at the end of the interview process.
3.2.5 Training of service users	• Ensure that service users have the appropriate knowledge and skills to be actively involved in the programme, including attendance at forums and on interview panels. • Show the training film 'Whose Life is it anyway?' this was made by people who use supported housing services in Manchester and funded by Supporting People. This film and the accompanying booklet aim to motivate and encourage service users to become more involved and to understand why service user involvement is important.
3.2.6 Any other methods as appropriate, including:	• Use of a video box or video booth • Audio communication • Comments box • Road shows • Telephone calls

3.3 Additional ideas to consider during the consultation period for the service user involvement strategy

Proposed Idea	Proposed form
3.3.1 Supporting People service user newsletter	• Quarterly • Updates on Supporting People, forums, service user consultations, service reviews etc • Interviews with service users • Feedback and updates from the Core User Group(?)
3.3.2 Supporting People Core User Group	*Format of the SP Core User Group:* • Representatives from each district and as wide a representation of client groups as possible. • 6-8 meetings per year, with specific meetings timed to take place just after the Commissioning Body

	meetings.
	• In between meetings it would be the User Participation Officers responsibility to keep the group updated and share information, follow up on any issues raised and to write up and send out the service user bulletin / newsletter to all Supporting People services.
	• There would need to be significant training for the service users.
	• Service users must show commitment to the group.
	Role of the SP Core User Group
	• Involved in developing and agreeing SP plans, policies and proposals. All documents would need to be Core User Group assessed.
	• Key role in the implementation of the Service User Involvement Strategy and action plan.
	• Scrutiny of SP documents and events to make them more service user friendly and increase service user attendance at SP events, such as the inclusive forum with the potential for a separate service user forum to be set up.
	• Involved in the development of information and consultation material.
	• Involved in future service reviews. The core user group would be involved in the service user consultation process, including providing advice and training to service users and developing ways to improve service user involvement in the service review process.
	• Consult and feedback information to peers through a Core Service User Bulletin / newsletter.
	• SP staff interviews, where appropriate.

3.4   Checklist for service user involvement

The Essex County Council Public Engagement Strategy 2004 sets out 10 principles for effective public engagement. These 10 principles have been

adapted and a checklist has been developed for the Supporting People team to follow when carrying out service user involvement activities:

3.4.1 Before the involvement activity

☐ Work in partnership with all Supporting People stakeholders to make sure that where appropriate service users are included in the Supporting People programme and any relevant involvement activities.

☐ Carry out consultations in line with Essex County Council Research Governance Framework, April 2005 and where needed seek research governance approval prior to consultations with service users.

☐ Make sure service users are notified as soon as possible about when and where meetings will take place, the content and approach of the meeting in order for them to decide whether they want to be involved and to plan for the activity. It will also allow service users to raise any concerns that they may have.

☐ Arrange meetings/events at an appropriate time and venue to suit the service user. For example take into account cultural, religious needs, wheelchair accessible, induction loops, advocacy support, sign language interpreters. Find out prior to the event any particular requirements and organise if needed.

☐ Where appropriate service users are involved in developing any information material for the meeting.

☐ Ensure information is made available in a range of formats and languages when needed.

☐ Keep up to date with findings and new initiatives in service user involvement and implement where suitable.

3.4.2 During the involvement activity

☐ Ensure that service users are supported throughout the involvement process and training is provided where needed.

☐ Work to make participation and involvement enjoyable, accessible and inclusive for all. For example making things available in various formats, use a range of involvement mechanisms, ensure cultural, religious and any particular needs are met.

☐ Clearly state the boundaries of the work, what can and cannot be changed and what is achievable and realistic.

☐ Provide 'out of pocket expenses' to service users and where appropriate pay service users for their time. Ensure that service users agree with the Essex Supporting People Service User Out of Pocket Expenses Policy, and they fill in and sign the agreement form.

3.4.3 After the involvement activity

☐ Share information in an appropriate format and timeframe between all relevant parties, where a request for confidentiality has not been made. This will enable further discussion into possible solutions, or to highlight problems.

☐ Keep service users up to date and provide feedback. Ensure that service users involved agree with any information passed on to the decision makers.

☐ Record, report and evaluate all service user involvement carried out while respecting service users confidentiality. Ask participants what could be improved about the process and act on the suggestions.

3.5 Consultation with Users-allegations made against members of staff Guidance

Guidance is being produced to advise members of the Supporting People team on how they should conduct themselves, situations they should be aware of when arranging and carrying out service user consultations to

help prevent allegations being made by service users against members of the team.

4.0   Service user involvement to date

The Supporting People team is already working towards achieving the four levels of service user involvement described in section 3.1 To date service users have been and are involved in:

4.1   Improvements to own service

Service Reviews

Acquiring feedback from service users is an important part of the service review process. In Essex service user views are sought through the use of a questionnaire and a service user consultation session during the validation visit.

Both of these approaches are working well. However to try and further improve the quality and 'friendliness' of the service user consultations, a series of service user questionnaires for the following groups, Older People, Higher Need, Short Term services, Floating Support services and Travellers have been produced. A 'guidance' form has also been developed to explain briefly about the validation visit and service user involvement in the service reviews. These are currently being piloted in all service reviews.

A flip chart with pictures and the key questions that will be asked during the consultation sessions is also being produced. This will assist in communicating with service users and will improve the consistency of the consultation sessions. Again, the flip chart will be piloted in service reviews.

Performance Indicators

Discussions with service providers are currently underway to develop practical Performance Indicators (PIs) that can be used to achieve an objective and quantifiable measure of whether service users consider providers are helping them to live independently.

4.2   Service planning and development

Value Improvement Project (VIP)

The Value Improvement Project will change the existing pattern of floating support services in Essex and improve the cost effectiveness and performance of the Supporting People programme in meeting the needs of vulnerable people. The change will deliver more efficient services to more people.

A stakeholder engagement plan has been developed to detail how stakeholders, including service users are going to be informed and involved in the design and development of new service solutions for floating support. Stakeholders are being engaged to inform them of the changes and to seek their involvement in working with the project to shape and deliver the best solution to meet the needs of the people of Essex.

4.3   Contribution to the direction of Supporting People policy

The development of the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy and Action Plan.

Service user involvement in the development of the 5 Year Strategy and action plan consisted of two rounds of consultations. These involved

Supporting People service users, ex service users and potential Supporting People service users to gain a whole range of views. This was via tapping in to existing groups and forums in the service users own environment and arranging meetings in partnership with service providers, voluntary organisations and County Council Advocacy Services[3].

This approach was chosen owing to the fact that Supporting People is somewhat invisible, as Supporting People does not deal directly with service users on a day-to-day basis. Setting up meetings in partnership with people that the service users know helped to gain their trust and helped to ensure that as many service users as possible could be included in the consultations.

After the consultations service users were thanked for their time and feedback was provided on how their views expressed have been used in the development of the 5 Year Strategy.

The approach used worked well for this consultation round. There was a good mix of service users and even though it was impossible to cover all client groups in all districts the views gained from the districts covered backed each other up. However work needs to be done to ensure that in the future service user consultations are less ad hoc. Section 5.2 details how this will be overcome.

Service User Involvement Strategy

The feedback gained from service users and service user representatives on the approach used for the development of the Supporting People 5 Year

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[3] Table one lists the service user representative organisations and groups that were involved in the development of the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy and action plan.

Strategy and other consultations has helped to shape and develop this strategy.

4.4   Involvement in Service Management

Service user interview panel

A service user interview panel was established for the Deputy Head of Supporting People interviews. The interview panel consisted of two service users, both from different support service types. The service users developed questions to ask and key points and characteristics to look for in the candidates. A mock interview was held to help train and prepare the service users for the interviews. After the interviews the service users were given a certificate confirming that they had successfully taken part in the interview panel.

The feedback from the service users helped to select the best candidate for the role.

TABLE ONE: Service user representative organisations involved in the development of the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy

Client Group Cluster	Primary Client Group	Service user representative organisations
Chaotic Lifestyles	• Short-Term Mental Health Problems • Drug Problems • Alcohol Problems • Mentally Disordered Offenders • Offenders or at Risk of Offending	• NEST (North Essex Stronger Together) • InterAct • Open Road • The Clockwise Centre, Clacton • Matrix Community Enterprise, Colchester • Homeless Hostels
Older People With Support Needs	• Frail Elderly • Older People Mental Health • Older People with Support Needs	• Age Concern • Sheltered Housing • Very Sheltered Housing
People who are Homeless	• Homeless Families with Support Needs • Rough Sleeper • Single Homeless with Support	• The Clockwise Centre, Clacton • Matrix Community Enterprise, Colchester • Open Road • Homeless Hostels
Young People	• Teenage Parents • Young People at Risk • Young People Leaving Care	• ECC Leaving and Aftercare Team • Foyers • Homeless Hostels
People with Long-Term Care / Support Needs	• Long-Term Mental Health Problems • Learning Disabilities • Physical or Sensory Disability	• NEST (North Essex Stronger Together) • InterAct • District Self Advocacy Groups • Essex Disabled People's Association (EDPA)
Black Minority & Ethnic Issues	• Black Minority & Ethnic People	• BME Action Group, working with the development worker (when in post).
People with HIV / AIDS	• People with HIV / AIDS	• ECC Specialist Social Workers
People at Risk of Domestic Abuse	• Women at Risk of Domestic Abuse	• Women's refuges
Refugees	• Refugees	•
Gypsy/Travellers	• Gypsy/Traveller	• ECC Gypsy Services
ALL CLIENT GROUPS	• **ALL CLIENT GROUPS**	• **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

5.0 Next Steps

The draft Service User Involvement Strategy will be out for consultation and feedback will be sought from service users and service user representative organisations on the approach used in the strategy. The strategy will be amended as appropriate.

There is still much to do to continue to improve service user involvement in the Supporting People programme. Detailed below are the key areas that Supporting People needs to focus on in the next year:

5.1 Client groups

Aim: Increase engagement and involvement of: travellers, people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, leaseholders and potential Supporting People service users, especially older people who are not currently in sheltered housing.

Methods:

- Continue to work with organisations such as Age Concern and other voluntary organisations.
- Continue to work with Essex County Council Gypsy Services
- When in post work with the BME housing development worker (Essex Equality and Diversity project).
- Send out a letter/leaflet to leaseholders to establish how and if they would like to be involved.

5.2 Overcome involvement practicalities

Aim: Improve service user awareness of Supporting People, ensure that involvement is less ad hoc and that consultation fatigue does not occur.

Methods:

- Make best use of existing practice to avoid pitfalls of the current ad hoc nature

- Use old reviews and consultations were appropriate.

- Continue to work in partnership.

- Seek research governance approval from the Essex County Council Research Governance Group for all Social Care service user consultations. Adhere to The Research Governance Guidance for all other consultations.

- Map service user involvement across Essex to create a database.

- Adopt the engagement plan from the Value Improvement Project.

- Follow the Briefing Strategy developed by the Continuous Improvement Team to increase awareness of Supporting People.

- Use the Essex Supporting People Communication Strategy as guidance.

5.1 Service user satisfaction with service

Aim: Further improve service user involvement in the service review process and develop practical PIs to establish whether

service users consider providers are helping them to live independently.

Methods:

- Pilot the new service user questionnaires and guidance forms and gain feedback on how user friendly they are, change if necessary.
- Continue to work with the Gypsy Liaison Manager to improve Gypsy and Traveller involvement in the review process.
- Continue to work with Granta Housing Association and other service providers to develop practical PIs.

6.0   The role of the Supporting People Team

The role of the Supporting People team will be two fold. Firstly, the team will inform, consult and involve service users and providers in the management of the Supporting People Programme within Essex. Secondly, the team will evaluate how local Housing Support Providers consult and involve service users within their services.

7.0   Reviewing

The Service User Involvement Strategy will be reviewed annually and the action plan updated accordingly. This will be through an annual consultation event.

8.0   Cross references and links to other documents

Essex County Council	2004	A Public Engagement Strategy for Essex County Council (Draft).
Essex County Council	2004	Service User, Carer (unpaid) and Representative Organisations Participation Policy (Draft)
Essex County Council	2004	Community Care Participation Strategy (Draft)
Essex County Council, Children and Young People's Services	2005	'Not Just Ticking the Box'. Developing a Children and Young People's Participation Strategy Across Essex.
Essex Supporting People	2005	Essex Supporting People 5 Year Strategy 2005-2010.
Essex Supporting People	2005	Draft Communication Strategy
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	2003	Supporting People: A guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services.